

PENALTY PUTS WANDERERS BACK ON TOP

By **STUART EARP** Wycombe Wanderers 1, Leatherhead 0

WYCOMBE Wanderers took their revenge for a 1-0 defeat at Leatherhead last month when they reversed the scoreline at Loakes Park on Tuesday night. A penalty by Dave Alexander after only eight minutes was enough to clinch three points and put Wanderers back on top of the Rothmans Isthmian League table.

A penalty looked the only way to separate these two well matched sides and although the game was always full of interest, the number of clear cut scoring chances could be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Two good defences and hard working midfield men dominated the game from start to finish. Wycombe's well operated offside trap caught Leatherhead time and again while at the other end, Dave Reid and Co. gave the home strikers a lean time.

It must be said, however, that Wanderers were often disappointing going forward. The approach work was good but the final pass infuriatingly went astray all too regularly. The Blues were not helped by the

form of Dylan Evans, who was well below full fitness following a bout of 'flu. Dylan tried his best but many attacks broke down when he lost possession and he could hardly put a foot right on the night.

On the credit side, the Wycombe back four can all feel happy with their performances while Mick Holfield was the pick of the midfield trio. Up front, Tony Horseman put in 100 per cent and was particularly impressive in the first half. It was a shame he was given such little support.

Nevertheless, three points are three points and Enfield must have been hoping for a slip-up at Loakes Park on Tuesday. Wanderers have the advantage of points in the bag and with fixtures piling up on Enfield, the title is far from decided yet.

The Blues had John Maskell back in goal after a lengthy lay-off while the honeymooning Howard Kennedy was absent from midfield. Holfield moved back with Evans returning to the side. The rain before and during the game made life difficult for the players who have grown used to iron-hard pitches in recent weeks. On Tuesday the ball skidded around alarmingly.

The eighth minute penalty

gave Wycombe an early bonus. Terry Reardon was trying to go forward in the penalty area when Steve Ibbitson handled the ball in full view of referee Colin Downey, who had no hesitation in awarding the spot kick.

ALEX SCORES

Whenever Wanderers win a penalty, the obvious choice is Tony Horseman to take the kick. 'Bodger', however, had missed from the spot at Fetcham Grove when facing John Swannell and Dave Alexander was instructed to take it. A cool customer, 'Alex' hit the ball a little straight but the goalkeeper went to his right and had no chance to recover.

The goal instilled some confidence into the Blues and they enjoyed a territorial advantage until half time although Swannell was seldom troubled. Whenever danger did threaten, however, the former England international looked strangely suspect, dropping a couple of crosses. His defence cleared the danger on both occasions.

At the other end, Leatherhead's best hopes rested upon the famous shoulders of Chris Kelly, their F.A. Cup hero of last season. Kelly is an extremely skilful footballer but his

insistence in hogging the ball obviously upset his colleagues. One particular break of his, when he beat four players in a run to the bye-line, was particularly memorable. If only he could part with the ball after beating one man, instead of taking on a couple more, he would be a complete player.

With neither side able to sustain pressure the half ended lamely. Wanderers' standard of passing having deteriorated somewhat as 45 minutes drew near.

For a spell in the early stages of the second half, Leatherhead began to look extremely dangerous. A series of accurate long passes to the flanks stretched the home defence but again, that offside trap served them in good stead. Whenever there was a break down the middle, either Paul Birdseye or Ray Eaton was quickly across to cover.

Willie Smith was lucky to escape a caution for a bodycheck on Reardon and from the free kick Swannell allowed the ball to bounce from his hands. John Delaney and Geoff Anthony were ready to pounce but Leatherhead quickly booted the danger clear.

Leatherhead's only clear chance of the game came after 76 minutes. For once the offside

trap failed and Johnny Doyle sprinted away to the bye-line. Wycombe were racing back when the cross came over but Colin Woffinden sent his header wide.

Two minutes later Evans sent an enormous high cross into the box where Swannell miscued his attempted punch. But Holfield was just too late at the far post to capitalise.

The game finished with one of the few clear chances of the night which Anthony vollied past the upright from 10 yards.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; R. Birdseye, K. Mead, J. Delaney, R. Eaton; D. Alexander, T. Reardon, M. Holfield; D. Evans, A. Horseman, G. Anthony. Sub. D. Bullock (not used).

LEATHERHEAD: J. Swannell; D. Sargent, D. Wells, D. Reid, P. Page; M. Bailey (sub. J. Cooper 58 mins.); W. Smith, S. Ibbitson; C. Kelly, C. Woffinden, J. Doyle.

Referee: G. Downey (Isleworth).
Half-time: 1-0. Goalscorer, Wycombe — Alexander pen. (8).

Attendance: 1,000.

Disco

WYCOMBE Wanderers are holding an Easter Disco at their Loakes Park clubhouse on Saturday at 8 p.m. Tickets are 50p.